Sometimes people will ask me: “Stu, how do you go into tough pastoral situations? Into a house where a child has died? Or someone has taken their own life? Or they’ve just been diagnosed with cancer?” Well, of course, I don’t go in alone; I know and believe that the Lord Jesus walks right beside me. But better yet, that HE, Jesus, is already there, already ministering, already speaking, already encouraging, already bringing hope. He’s gone on ahead of me. I just have to be present to HIM, and see what HE is doing, and listen to His voice. I get out of the way and let HIM be the bridge to His heavenly Father and to all the love and power of God. On Easter, I want you to consider that Jesus Christ is the bridge to the Father and the BRIDGE TO ETERNITY.

Think about the old Simon and Garfunkel song, “Bridge Over Troubled Water” “When you’re weary, feeling small, when tears are in your eyes, I’ll dry them all...when times get rough and friends just can’t be found, like a bridge over troubled water, I will lay me down.” Jesus is the bridge over the troubled waters of your life; He is the way and the truth and the life; HE has gone on ahead of us already, that wherever we are HE is already there; O, and by the way, HE has laid down His life for you, “I will lay me down”, and He is crucified for you and raised for you; and He will walk through every situation in life for you.

Jesus promises us, “I go to prepare a place for you...” (John 14: 2) I am out ahead of you. I have built a bridge for you to cross over. You are not alone. I go to prepare that place for you “that where I am you may be also.” (v. 2)

Easter is that promise that whatever troubled waters we face in life that Jesus is already there. Lo, HE is with us always, even to close of the age. After Jesus is raised from the dead that very first Easter an angel appears to the women who have come seeking Jesus in the tomb. And the angel declares to them: “Behold, HE (Jesus) is going before you to Galilee.” (Matthew 28: 7) Jesus is already there. Jesus is waiting for you. In whatever “Galilee” you face in life, Jesus has constructed a bridge, He is already there and waiting with open arms. And the angel then also promises: “There you will see Him.” (v. 7)

You will see HIM and experience Him in the midst of the troubled waters of your every Galilee in life. HE has gone before us; He has prepared a place for us; where HE is we shall be also. There we will see HIM. The message of Easter for the hurting and troubled heart today!

Now I will tell you a secret that really is no secret at all. Most of the problems and ills, sadnesses and frustrations, losses and pain in life are because we choose to focus on the problems instead of focusing on the solution. We become enmeshed in our troubles and focus on them. We become consumed with our grief and loss and focus on them. We become fixated on our problems and become mired in the slough of despond. Like quicksand the more we struggle in the midst of our turmoil and trials in life the more they suck us down into the abyss. Focus on your troubled waters and you will have more troubled waters. But focus on Jesus, focus on HE who was dead but is alive forevermore, Focus on the One who has promised to be our way, and to be our bridge, and to go ahead of us, to prepare a place for us, to be with us in whatever Galilee in life we face, focus on HIM and HE becomes the transport OVER the troubled waters, HE indeed becomes the WAY and the TRUTH and our NEW LIFE in Him. “No one comes to the Father but by me.” (John 14: 6) says Jesus. I am the bridge to God.
I am the bridge to new life. I am the bridge over troubled waters. I am the only and exclusive bridge over the troubled water and into eternity, saith the Lord. On Easter, my beloved, will you place your faith and trust in Him alone?????

For me, this is no mere intellectual exercise today. Easter is life and death for me. Over the past three years I have lost both of my parents and I struggle with grief. So when I tell you that it is best to focus on Jesus as our bridge, rather than on our grief and pain, it comes from the existential struggles in my own life. I have told you before in other sermons that I believe the moment we close our eyes in death we are immediately in the presence of Jesus. He indeed has gone on ahead of us in death to prepare a place for us of eternal life with Him –where HE is, we indeed shall be also. HE is the BRIDGE TO ETERNITY. As we close our eyes in death the very first thing we next see is His glorious face; the One we have so longed to see we now see, as the Bible says, “face-to-face”. We see the GLORY of God in the face of Christ. We see in HIM all the fullness of God. We know indeed “love never ends”. We experience in HIM the fulfillment of His every promise and the dream held in every human heart. We behold Him in all His glory. Then I believe that our loved ones are there as well. They are standing around Jesus as part of the mighty cloud of witnesses, the communion of the saints, welcoming us to heaven. We are reassured by seeing Jesus and experiencing His presence, and doubly reassured by seeing our loves ones there, as well.

There is the beautiful Resurrection Window to your immediate right as you exit the sanctuary. It allows the light of the world to shine through to remind us of an eternal light of glory. But after the windows were cleaned and refurbished I actually looked at them more carefully. There is an angel to the right side of Jesus arrayed in blue. There is an angel to the left side of Jesus arrayed in white. I remember my Dad reminding me often that he was to be buried in his “burying suit”. Don’t throw it out. Use this one, Stu. And of course I did what my Dad asked and he was buried in his “burying suit”. With Mother it was harder; she had given away most of her nice dresses. Mostly she just wore pant suits with jackets. So I had a dilemma what clothes to put on Mother. And I knew if I chose wrong she would rise up out of the casket and haunt me forever! So I went through her closet and found a beautiful white dress that she had worn long ago and must have meant something to her because she had saved it. So Mother was buried in a beautiful white dress. And every Sunday when I sit here in the sanctuary and feel the sadness well up within me –some hymn that brings back memories; some memory that brings back both a smile and a tear—I look over at the Resurrection Window. And there I see our Lord and Savior, risen from the dead on Easter, arrayed in the light of eternity, HE who has gone on ahead to prepare a place for us. And to His right I see my Dad dressed in blue and to His left I see my Mother dressed in white, and it transports me back to joy and love and victory of that future moment when I shall close my eyes in death and open them again, to see them both once again, by my Savior’s side. O, what a glorious Easter that will be. O, what a day of triumph it shall be. O, what joy shall fill my heart. Thanks be unto God who giveth us the VICTORY through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, HE who is the bridge to eternity and the bridge over every troubled water in this life! Amen and Amen.

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